

Toothpaste

Toothpaste



Georgia 4-H Cotton Boll and Consumer
Judging

You can keep all of your teeth healthy and looking good by brushing and flossing and by having regular professional checkups! You should brush your teeth with a soft toothbrush and pick toothpaste that meets your needs.

But which toothpaste should you buy? There are more than 110 toothpastes on the market today! Toothpaste companies try their hardest to sell their brand promising whiter teeth, less sensitive teeth or plaque free teeth! How do you choose?

You should choose a toothpaste to meet the needs of your teeth. Here we will discuss some of the basic things toothpaste can do for us: cleaning vs. plaque fighting, giving us fluoride vs. fighting gingivitis and tartar and if cost should be a determining factor.

Cleaning

Toothpaste's cleaning ability depends on how good it is at removing surface stains resulting from different food and drinks. Your teeth are cleaned by the abrasive ingredients in the toothpaste rubbing against your teeth. One abrasive that can be found in toothpaste is baking soda. Some toothpastes use between 50-60% while others use as little as 1%. You should be careful when choosing toothpaste that has a rough abrasiveness. Tooth enamel is the hardest substance in your body, but once any decay or cracks have formed, enamel will not heal on its own. Tooth enamel can usually take the harshness of a rough abrasive, but your dentin can be damaged by harsh abrasives. Dentin is the softer tissue below your gum line that's exposed as your gums become damaged by improper brushing.

Plaque

Bacteria are always present in your mouth. When they are not removed by brushing and flossing, bacteria stick to your teeth and multiply into larger and larger colonies called plaque. Plaque forms as a soft, sticky film on your teeth. Plaque even begins growing minutes after you brushed. This sticky plaque damages teeth in two ways. First, food particles, especially sugars, stick to it. The plaque uses that food to grow more bacteria and to produce acid. Second, the plaque holds the acid against the tooth surface. If it is not removed, the acid will eventually eat through the tooth enamel, causing a cavity. When you use toothpaste that attacks plaque, it actually fights the germs that cause cavities.

What is fluoride?

It is very important for you to brush with toothpaste that contains fluoride. Fluoride is the ingredient found in toothpaste that actually fights cavities (not the germs). When plaque acids start to dissolve tooth enamel and create the first trace of a cavity, fluoride can help minerals in your saliva reenter the tooth to repair the damage.

You should brush with fluoride toothpaste for 2 minutes at least twice a day using a soft bristled toothbrush. (Most people only brush for a minute-at best!) It is very important to find toothpaste that releases its fluoride within the first minute of brushing. A lucky thing is that most of them do.

So how do we know if toothpaste meets the criteria for quick release of fluoride? Read the label! Look for the ADA (American Dental Association) seal. Read it to see what properties it covers (plaque, tarter, etc.).

Gingivitis

When your gums begin to swell and the bones supporting your teeth get infected this results in tooth loss. This can happen if you don't brush your teeth! The first sign of this disease is called Gingivitis. Gingivitis is marked by swollen, bleeding gums and bad breath. This stage is painless and, unfortunately, many people do not seek help from a dentist. As this disease worsens, the bones supporting the tooth and ligaments become affected and the teeth eventually fall out. Researchers recently found that stannous fluoride (an ingredient in some toothpaste) can reduce gingivitis by perhaps 10-20%. However, this chemical may leave a stain on your teeth that a dentist or hygienist must remove.

Tackling Tartar

Tartar is plaque that has combined with food particles and minerals in saliva to form a hard, yellowish mass only a dentist or hygienist can remove. If you keep plaque away by brushing thoroughly and flossing daily, you may form less tartar between cleanings. Some people do make tartar rapidly, either because of body chemistry or because they do not brush their teeth enough or they brush their teeth wrong. Tartar control toothpastes can help. They contain a chemical that slows the buildup of new tarter above the gum-line. Take note: No tartar control toothpaste can reduce tartar that's already on your teeth or remove tartar that is below your gum line - where tartar causes gum disease.

Sensitive Teeth

As gums recede and expose dentin, the newly uncovered section of tooth may be very sensitive to heat, cold or pressure. Some toothpastes on the market can now block the nerve endings causing the pain. Take note: toothpaste for sensitive teeth is generally appropriate for only a few weeks!

Cost

Toothpastes vary in price from 44 cents to \$10.28 per month, based on the national price average for brushing twice daily. Price does not always correlate to performance!

When weighing claims that toothpaste makes, take the ADA seal seriously! It's a sign for consumers that says exactly what the toothpaste will do. If a toothpaste does not carry the ADA seal, the toothpaste may be making untrue promises or exaggerating.

Types of Toothpaste

There are many “specialty” toothpastes on the market that consumer can select from. Each is designed to meet individual needs. These include:

- *Whitening Toothpaste* -- Whitening toothpastes contain chemical or abrasive ingredients to help remove and/or prevent stains from forming on the teeth. When used regularly, whitening toothpastes can reduce the appearance of stains and make your teeth look whiter.
- *Antimicrobial* -- Antimicrobial toothpastes may contain stannous fluoride, an antibacterial agent that also provides anti-cavity and sensitivity benefits.
- *Tartar Control Toothpaste* -- Tartar-control toothpastes may contain sodium pyrophosphate which helps to keep tartar from forming on teeth or better yet, sodium hexametaphosphate, which helps prevent tartar and stain, above the gum line. But if you already have stubborn tartar, tartar control toothpaste won't remove it. You'll need a professional cleaning from your dental hygienist. It's beneficial to start using tartar-control toothpaste after a dental checkup.
- *Desensitizing Toothpaste* -- Tooth sensitivity often results from weakened enamel or the exposure of roots due to receding gums. Desensitizing toothpastes work by creating a barrier and blocking irritants from reaching the nerves. Avoid whitening toothpaste if you have sensitive teeth as the chemical they contain may cause irritation or worsening of your symptoms.
- *Fluoride Toothpaste* -- Fluoride is important to your dental health and can be added to any type of toothpaste. Not only does fluoride strengthen teeth against dental cavities but it remineralizes teeth worn by acid and fights sensitivity. Fluoride toothpaste is an excellent choice for those who need a little extra help protecting themselves from cavities -- especially children and seniors. Fluoride toothpastes are also recommended for those without the benefit of community water fluoridation.
- *Gum Health Toothpaste* -- Dental plaque found under the gum line can lead to gum disease. Although gum health toothpastes are not a professional gum disease treatment, they can control dental plaque and help prevent the possibility of gum disease in the future.
- *Fresh Breath Toothpaste* -- Like many mouthwashes, fresh breath toothpastes are designed to mask bad breath but do not actually treat halitosis.
- *Natural Toothpaste* -- For those who are uncomfortable brushing with chemicals, natural toothpastes may be an option. These contain all-natural ingredients but have varied results. Some natural toothpastes may not contain fluoride, so you should check the label before buying the product.
- *Children's Toothpaste* -- These toothpastes have been developed to meet the special needs of children. As children are extremely susceptible to dental cavities, their toothpastes often contain fluoride. Younger children should only use a small amount of toothpaste to avoid ingestion and prevent dental fluorosis and should be always supervised during brushing. Many children's toothpastes are especially high in sugar, so be sure to keep an eye on their labels.

- *Baking Soda Toothpaste* -- Baking soda has traditional significance because it was once used to clean teeth. Although baking soda has no therapeutic value, some prefer it because they enjoy the fresh feeling they get after brushing with it.
- *Gels* -- Some gels contain mouthwash which may be why some prefer the consistency or taste of a gel over a toothpaste. While gels may make your mouth feel fresher, there's no proof that they clean teeth better than toothpastes. Also, many gels do not contain fluoride.
- *Tooth Powders* -- Dry powders are also available to clean your teeth but they are often more abrasive than toothpaste.
- *Organic* - Organic toothpaste is derived from the use of all natural ingredients such as mint and other similar herbs that are also natural breath fresheners. They are not formulated to be like a form of “soap” for your teeth like regular toothpaste is. Organic toothpaste contains all of the needed elements without the potentially harmful chemicals. Organic toothpaste can be a wise and healthier choice for those who would like to minimize the amount of chemicals they use for oral health. The all -natural solutions in organic toothpaste contain natural antibacterial ingredients such as spearmint and peppermint oils. These help to eliminate bacteria and keep your mouth healthy.

Overall Recommendations of What to Look for When Buying Toothpaste:

- *ADA Accepted.* When selecting a toothpaste, usually you would look for a product that is ADA accepted. This means that the product has been tested clinically and it is as safe as well as efficient toothpaste or dental product.
- *Fluoride.* The ADA advises everyone to use fluoride toothpaste. Fluoride in toothpaste helps to fight off cavities in your teeth. For the best protection, find a toothpaste with at least 1,000 parts per million fluoride
- *Pick a product that cleans well.* Most people, who do not have special requests of their toothpaste, can choose toothpaste that fits in their price range and personal preference.
- *Plaque or tarter control.* For plaque removal, the best bet is to brush correctly. Plaque and tarter control toothpaste can help people who have problems with plaque built that is excessive.
- *Sensitive teeth.* Less abrasive toothpaste might be a better choice for those people who have tooth or gum erosion or sensitive teeth. Potassium nitrate, is very effective ingredient for sensitive teeth. Potassium nitrate should be listed in the ingredients of good sensitive toothpaste.

- *Whitening:* Containing polishing or chemical agents that remove surface stains, this toothpaste is able to help maintain the natural color of your teeth.
- *Taste.* Some consumer may like bold, fresh-flavored toothpaste, but others may not. Remember that the flavor of the toothpaste has an effect on how much we brush. Avoid heavily sweetened toothpaste.
- *Organic.* Look for one without fluoride, sodium laurel sulfate or saccharin.

Choosing toothpaste can be a daunting task. There are so many brands and types of toothpaste on the market, and so many advertising claims, that it can be difficult to work your way through the confusion. Understanding the facts behind the hype can make your decision on which toothpaste to choose a bit easier to make. Read the label before purchasing your toothpaste. Look for any unfamiliar ingredients while ensuring that the ingredients that you want are present. Then, choose a toothpaste that best meets your individual needs.

Sources:

Consumer Reports

American Dental Association

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